Security is no accident

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Security is no Accident: Journey's through Safe(r) Space in Transnational Migrant Solidarity Camps

> At this particular historical moment (there is) a disconnect between white feminists' notions of "safety" as an ideal we should organize around, and, on the other side of the not-so-fun funhouse mirror, organizing by feminists of color around policing/prisons and immigration/borders -- issues that expose the fantasy of "safety" as a product of privilege; issues that feminists of color have increasingly centered in their activism while white feminists seem to be struggling to understand whether they are feminist issues at all… If feminism is about social change, it is about recognizing that safety in this society is a fantasy afforded only by assimilation to power (Hoffman, 2008).

This chapter will examine the political activities, and in particular, practices of safety enacted by transnational migrant solidarity collectives and projects based in the UK and on the French/British border zone of Calais. Specifically I am going to look at two groups, London No Borders and Calais Migrant Solidarity and the use or lack of use of safe spaces policies in negotiating and confronting issues of safety and insecurity within their praxis and organising spaces. I will recount the issues that arose during the Calais No Border Camp of 2009 and the establishment of the Feminist Security Group. The last section of this chapter is a list of recommendations for transnational migrant solidarity activists that seek to use the concept of safe(r) spaces policy in managing collectivity and the lessons that have been learnt both in my activism and through my interviews with fifteen of these collective members.

Within the collectives I participate in there has been a shift in recent years towards embracing concepts such as; safer spaces, community accountability and grassroots justice, in an attempt to transform current models of conflict resolution that could otherwise depend on the systemically racialised models of punishment such as incarceration or institutionalisation. Following in the footsteps of organisations such as INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence[1], Reclaim Justice Network (http://downsizingcriminaljustice.wordpress.com), Critical Resistance (http://criticalresistance.org) and the Creative Interventions Toolkit (http://www.creative-interventions.org), my interviews with solidarity activists revealed that individuals and collectives are attempting to consolidate a more effective and anti-oppressive ethic of care in dispute resolution processes- though the best ways to do this are as yet unclear.

Calais Migrant Solidarity is an activist collective established at the end of the Calais No Border protest camp in the summer of 2009. This camp was a result numerous meetings of activists from France and UK (a number of whom were based in Calais and neighbouring French cities) meeting monthly for six months to discuss what kind of intervention would be received fruitfully by local people and migrant populations. After these meetings the proposal for an activist camp was brought back to the UK and organised by those of us involved with the No Borders network in conjunction with local people and migrants.
Some of the solidarity work CMS does could be considered charitable, and there are on-going arguments about how to negotiate our activism alongside our critiques of the big

[1] One of the reasons INCITE! stands out against other anti-violence organisations is their systemic analysis. They see women of colour who have experienced violence as living the 'dangerous intersections' of white supremacy, patriarchy, capitalism, and other oppressive structures and institutions… they call for the re-centring of marginalised folks as opposed to a method of 'inclusiveness' based on one single identity or social location (Shannon and Rogue 2013: 5-6).

society and its model citizens[2]. The list of activities include; free English classes, free basic legal advice (outlining options available for those that wish to make a claim in the UK and those that intend to live clandestinely), workshops running through the questions the UK Border Agency ask during the asylum application process, sleeping in front of the squats and encampments (the press calls these the 'jungles') in order to prevent immigration raids, the occasional housing of injured people and minors, organising demonstrations against the mayor and other ministers when they meet in Calais, myth-busting leaflets about what the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) actually provides if you agree to return to your country of origin, and twice a year taking over the meal provision usually done by the charities when they have their 6 week break. The group is constantly revising what is 'too charitable' to be considered solidarity work which is a whole chapter in itself, but this need only serve as an outline of activities and ethos of the collective. Activists sleep in a string of different places, variously called 'the office', 'the hangar', and different squatted houses, including recently an emcampment next to the Tioxide factory (https://calaismigrantsolidarity.wordpress.com/page/2/). These places, as well as somewhere to sleep, are also used as a place to socialise during the day with groups of migrants that don't often necessarily interact with each other. The space is populated by Afghans, Syrians, Iraqi-Kurds, Sudanese, Eritreans amongst others, though this varies depending on global political events, along with a varying number of activists from the EU. It is without doubt one of the most challenging and rewarding collectives I have ever had the privilege of being involved with. It's an on-going project that is *fairly* well established in terms of funding and activist footfall.

It is my intention to use this chapter to reflect on the way that safer spaces were (and were not) negotiated at the Calais No Border Camp 2009, and look to ways that transnational migrant solidarity collectives may be able to approach safer spaces as a process rather than a document, thus encouraging a cultural shift in terms of viewing safety as constructed collectively, rather than seeing it as a set of 'rules' imposed by policy working groups or imported artificially from other activist camps.

Safety is not a Security Force, Safety is no Accident

This chapter seeks to move beyond conceptions of safety as available only as a regulated possibility. There is understandably a particular motivation to protect or provide safety for women if they are under threat of attack, but this can lead to what Pendleton and Serisier call a 'sexualisation of crisis' (2009). By seeking to identify safety as a space constructed around an unspoken agreement on 'correct' behaviour and 'incorrect' behaviour this leads to a politics of regulation and normalisation, based on the idea that there is a majority who understand the ethical/moral/desirable conduct, and they are responsible for admonishing those who do not adhere. This not only relies upon the idea that there is or can be a shared understanding across all experiences, but also may exclude and further isolate those with no relationship to these 'norms', i.e. those occupying subject positions that escape normative classification. Relying on the idea that there is a correct conduct of safety, particularly in terms of sex, gender and behaviour, may in fact eventuate in attacks on queer people and marginalised others.
Pendleton and Seriser conclude that the assertion that 'victims' can be saved through regulatory practices including 'progressive' women-friendly policy lends itself to the belief that the state can be used to overcome exclusion (p.78), I would argue that this replicates the production of zones of exclusion and perpetuates practices of othering

[2] The Big Society is British Prime Minister David Cameron's response to the economic crisis. This distinctly neoliberal idea is that the public service will operate through 'volunteerism' allowing the public purse to shrink, taxes to be lowered and 'market efficiency' to decide which public services continue to run (Ishkanian, 2014).

(p.78). (is this the right place for this?)

At my arrival in Calais for the No Border Camp in 2009, there was three days left of preparation before the official start date. There were a number of activities that needed to be carried out; digging toilets and building showers, setting up the 'welcome tent', and writing a safer space policy. I noted in my fieldwork for my masters thesis that it was much easier to find volunteers to dig toilets than write guidelines about oppression and protest camps (English, 2010:6). Everyone claimed they knew what the policy was for, but no one knew how to proceed with composing it. The original version in English was delayed and delayed until only an hour before the opening meeting and the translations of the document (most meetings were translated in to six languages) weren't finished until the camp was nearly over. This was agreed to be a failure in collective responsibility, as it fell to a working group of mostly young men who were keen to take oppressive behaviours seriously, but, like everyone else, felt nervous about where to begin (English, 2010:6).
It is true that policies alone cannot avert a crisis, but we will never know if there could have been a different outcome to the particular crisis of this camp.
On the fourth day of the camp, a group complaint was brought to the evening general meeting. There were reports of 'Afghan men' unzipping women's tents and attempting to enter them without invitation. This was reported on by one of the women from the anarchist zine Last Hours, who wrote in her account,

> ... A lot of women...felt unsafe at the camp with incidents of men hanging round tents asking women if they could come in and sexual harassment. However, in true DiY[3] form women organised to improve this situation, taking turns patrolling the area (http://www.lasthours.org.uk/articles/no-border-in-calais/)

As with many stories of this nature, there were a number of extenuating circumstances as I discovered in my fieldwork. Each year there is a donation of tents to Calais Migrant Solidarity following the large-scale music festivals in the UK such as Glastonbury. The tents are invariably made up largely of the cheapest tents available from the biggest commercial retailers such as Argos. Following the donations in 2009, this resulted in around 200 tents that looked almost exactly the same being donated to the Calais camp, many of which were set up next to the tents already set up by the activists, which were also mostly the cheapest tent available. One could argue in this situation that if men were unzipping the wrong tents, so possibly, were many women- because so many of the tents looked exactly the same. This is not to discredit those who were being harassed, and I do believe that women were being harassed during the camp, I am noting this point about the tents because it was a fact strangely absent from reflections at the time.

The nature of the complaint was one that brought the as yet uncatered for questions of safety and security at the camp to the fore. As there is always a pressure to 'push aside' issues that appear to pose gender against race when organising in Calais (interview with Rita[4]) there needed to be a clear proposal that could be carried out immediately without much debate. What resulted was a group of women setting up a 'security group' to patrol the sleeping areas.

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[3] DIY in this instance refers to a 'Do it Yourself' style of politics, where activist communities aim to resolve their own issues rather than calling in professionals or the state to fix practical or social problems within the community. This can be anything from learning to repair/install plumbing and electrics etc in squats and social centres, right through to finding community solutions to problems of theft, sexual assault, anti-social behaviour etc. (for examples, see McKay: 1998, Feigenbaum, Frenzel, McCurdy: 2013).
[4] The names of my participants have been anonymised to protect their identities.

At our camp we had neither 'women-friendly' policy (The safer spaces policy) nor an alternative to penalising those who acted outside of (unagreed) norms. When no consensus was reached at the meeting, a group of women called their own meeting to discuss what to do. This resulted in the proposal for a Feminist Security Group.
The Feminist Security Group was a group of volunteers (mostly women, many from the queer bloc) regularly monitoring the encampment at night, the shifts were for 2-4 hours and would involve walking through the tents with torches asking if everyone was 'feeling okay' and encouraging those who seemed 'too intoxicated' to go to bed. This situation was an incredibly awkward presence for many at the camp but was only in place for the final two nights of the camp before everyone returned to their homes, seemingly there was not enough time to discuss the variety of problematic call-outs at the general meetings including 'Who is available to monitor the Afghan area?' (cited in English, 2010:8).

Could policy regulating the camp have averted this situation? 'Safer spaces' policies are designed to deal with oppressive behaviours within activist movements and as an alternative to calling in the police or the state to make these environments feel safe again (Serisier, 2013). The outcome of these policies varies greatly, as will be expanded upon in the final section of this chapter.
The Feminist Security Group, and its critics, mobilised understandings of power in particular ways. An example of this is below,

> My skin colour means I am less likely to suffer violence at the hands of the police, and many other less obvious unearned privileges... (but)... My gender, or people's perception of my gender, means that I am often seen as a second-class citizen, especially by those who come from *heavily patriarchal societies*. In Calais I have met many people who have become my friends, but I have also had moments where the inferiority with which people regard me has become all too painfully obvious, talking about me in a derogatory way knowing that I cannot understand, following me to my tent during the camp, and refusing to engage with me as an individual because of my gender. The jungle has been described as an 'open prison', made of predominantly men, and because of this I can understand some of the reasons for these behaviours, but it does not make it acceptable[5] (www.calaismigrantsolidarity.wordpress.com/calais9, emphasis added)

The quest for a generalisable environment of safety for all those participating in the camp is the end goal of a safer space policy, but enabling an equalised space is neither desirable nor possible according to some of my interview participants (Kavita 2013, Anna 2013). Some argue that the way to end sexism in solidarity movements is to 'stick around through the drama and earn your stripes with the oppressed group in question' (interview with Mia, 2014). But this is neither possible nor desirable for many women involved in solidarity projects. Is it possible to reach an idea of safety collectively? Can we find an agreement that respects the needs of marginalised communities and the vulnerabilities that we each bring to the solidarity camp?

[5] The harassment of women at the camp and in ongoing ways for the CMS network is something that remains urgent and largely unspoken about. For further discussion on this see English, C (2014) 'Bordering on Reproducing the State: Migrant Solidarity Collectives and Constructions of the Other in Safer Space' in S Price and R Sanz Sabido (eds.) *Contemporary Protest and the Legacy of Dissent*, Rowman and Littlefield: London

Five Considerations for Safer Spaces Policy makers in Migrant Solidarity Projects

In my interviews a number of themes emerged from which it is possible to list five main considerations necessary when constructing a space where it is possible to discuss safety. I will first list these so that an overview can be taken, and then go in to more depth below.

Firstly, an atmosphere of (relative) safety is processual, it is the act of collective writing and discussion that give safer spaces policies their usefulness, not the performance of a small working group producing piece of writing to stick on a wall.

Secondly, organising spaces based on identity (also known as autonomous organizing) whilst useful as a tactic or as respite during particular disputes cannot, or at least have not so far, enabled a holistic struggle against oppressive tendencies within broader organising spaces. Women only sleeping spaces in Calais has not led to an organising environment free of sexism, nor eliminated incidents of harassment.

Thirdly, Reflexivity is an integral part of a collective that takes the ongoing participation of marginalized groups as paramount to solidarity work, i.e. never be 'too busy fighting' to reflect.

Fourthly, avoid totalizing statements, i.e. don't use phrases like 'Race trumps the experience of Gender here' (interview with Jeremy), and similarly avoid universalizing statements that silence people's experiences such as 'Any man would do that…' (interview with Sofia).

Fifthly, Consider who fails to be cared for when creating a safer space- if you are creating a set of rules that might be broken, what happens to those individuals? Try to remember that there will be dissidents (those who disagree with your rules), assailants (those who forcefully break those rules), and those who might break them as part of their personal issues- such as those with mental health problems, substance users and addicts.

1. Safety in/as Process

One of the issues with the use of safer spaces that came through in my interviews was that although the policy was supposed to indicate a commitment to fighting forms of oppression such as sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia and so on, it had in fact become what was referred to as a 'tick-boxing' activity.

> I mean sometimes there's a piece of paper that people write stuff on, so they're 'doing' safe spaces but still… you get to meetings and actually they're not creating a safe space. So I'm not entirely sure if people use them (safer space policies). Sometimes you go to an activist camp and people talk about safe space, consensus decision-making and having vegan food, and it just becomes something that comes with it rather than anything else (interview with Anna).

Kavita commented similarly noting that many of these strategies follow in the footsteps of US activists in ways that do not always translate smoothly to the UK context.

> Kavita: The point originally wasn't the document *but the process of getting there* and now it's like, well, if we've lost the document we can print one off the internet...
> Me: And the attitude would be that it might be better than the one we wrote anyway...
> Kavita: Yeah. And it will probably be from North America so it will use expressions that most of us don't use here like 'Folk of Color'. Like, who? (interview with Kavita)

This is also a theme that comes through in the literature on Safer Spaces, the Roestone Collective describe safer spaces as a 'relational work' (2014:3). By examining safe spaces through the relational work of creating and maintaining them, we find that this reconfigures the experience of space as safe or unsafe (2014:4). In other words, it is through a critical cultivation of these kinds of spaces (be they aiming for 'safety' or simply attempting to open the possibility for engagement from as many people as possible) that these policies begin to matter.

2. Safety in/as Separation

There is a particular belief that by organizing 'autonomously'- which in this context means working only with people from within a particular identity category- individuals can be free of or buffered from oppressive social relations. This was apparent in my interview with Virginia about whether there was a grievance policy in place in her feminist group, her lack of urgency to put one in place was stark in comparison to her reflections on her time in Calais. She was very clear that her experience of Calais was one that left her more committed than ever to opening up discussions around safety and gender in her organizing practices. But of her own collective she remarked,

> We haven't got a safer spaces policy and I do think we should because there have been a lot of discussion around these things because of stuff that is happening in other parts of the Left and the need to have a pro-active policy before things happen rather than just a policy that is just reacting which I think is something that's happened in quite a lot of cases. *Our meetings are self-defined women only and for this reason it doesn't seem like such an important concern* but I think it is and I think it's something that we can and will look at but haven't… it's not a big concern for us at the moment (interview with Viginia).

This comment implies that there are less likely to be grievances between women than in general organizing spaces. Josie, another interviewee from the same feminist collective disproved this when she recounted a time that the collective's trans-inclusiveness had been brought in to question, and without a grievance policy it had been difficult to have a dialogue about it with this person (interview with Josie).

In my fieldwork in Calais there were various reported experiments with women only sleeping spaces for both activists and migrants. Rita was an advocate for the office keeping a room for women activists to sleep separately,

> where's the bit of paper that says, right you're here (in Calais), this room is only for women to sleep, because there could be reasons that after a certain time this is where you can go, this is where you can't go. No men can go here, then there's no exceptions... (interview with Rita).

Although this is one measure that has been tried out in Calais, I learned during my fieldwork that it was eventually abandoned as many of the women had travelled with male comrades or lovers and wanted to be able to sleep in the same space as them. Following this there was a rule that people (though this was only mentioned in

relation to women's safety) would be strongly advised not to sleep in the migrant camps without another activist with them. This rule relied upon the assertion that women are more likely to be safe alone with other activist (mostly white) men in the office than with the migrant men in the jungles

> When I was in Calais an activist approached me and said, "I know the rules are that women shouldn't hang out in migrant circles by ourselves overnight... But right now the activist house is full of men I don't know and actually the migrant house is full of men I do know who I've been socialising with for three months and… I just don't care I'm gonna sleep up there with them" and at the end of the day what argument can you make about that? If that's where she feels safe then that's fine. I mean actually what happened was there was a fight really late at night and she got scared and it didn't work out that there was a safe space for her in the activist house or in the migrant house…there was nowhere for her (Janeska, personal communication, 2013).

Trying to reduce the complex personal experience of collective organising down to something based on same-ness, similar cultural background or identity can obscure intersectional experiences of oppression. The Roestone collective write about the demise of lesbian communities or 'Lesbian Land' that occurred in the 1980s after expelling not only heterosexual and bisexual women, but also male children of women on the community. Eventually due to declining numbers a certain level of economic privilege was seemingly required to participate, leading to the group becoming harder to access for women of colour, working class women, disabled women and Others who wanted to live on the community land (2014: 10). Similar critiques of Reclaim the Night marches have been made, where feminist calls for higher levels of policing in economically deprived neighborhoods have had drastic impacts upon communities of colour, for both men and women, leaving the streets safer only for women with particular classed and racialised privileges (Bhavani and Coulson, 1986: 88).

The Roestone collective argue that what is needed to challenge patriarchy is experimentations with intersectional inclusion. They argue that organizing around identity has a depoliticizing effect and the false nature of organizing 'outside of or separate to' the rest of society creates the understanding that one can opt out of social forces (2014:9). To foster this kind of intersectional inclusion, my interviewees suggested that groups ought to spend more time in collective reflection (interviews with Rita and Sofia).

3. Safety in Reflexivity

Most of the people I interviewed who had spent time in Calais were amenable to, and some desperately keen for, a discussion of collective safety but there was a resistance to it as well- the discomfort around the issue wasn't easily alleviated. There was both a feeling that 'they didn't need it personally' (interviews with Jeremy and Jack) that it was something likely to be needed by Others, and that this somehow meant that the discussion should be initiated by those Others. Jack said that he had seen Trauma Support Spaces and Safer Spaces (he demonstrated that he thought of these things as the same or very similar) in operation before but,

> To be honest I never really interacted with them, if I'd been at an eviction… I might have. I've probably got a distorted view… and not a very big view of it anyway, I've really only heard people in the trauma support group come along to meetings and explaining what they do. And I've thought, 'Hmmm, this all sounds a bit wishy washy.' Now maybe if I was actually in trauma and in need of some support I would find it really helpful so I'm not dismissing it but

> it never engaged me hearing them talk about it. I mean I've certainly been in traumatic situations where there hasn't been anything, you know I've been on anti-fascist demonstrations where I've been a quivering wreck on the way home, so I can see it's a good thing if it works but I've not actually been engaged with it so... (Interview with Jack)

The interview with Jack was interesting, his personal experience of discomfort or lack of safety in activist movements was tied more to fear of physical assault from outsiders (fascists for example) than it was to experiences of interactions between activists. He was able to reflect upon the fact that women and migrants might need extra support, but he was 'waiting for their lead' (interview with Jack).

The interview with Jeremy was similar in tone when reflecting on his experience of organizing in anarchist groups,

> Calais was probably the only situation I've ever been in where the gender composition has been so unbalanced but most of the time when organising, going on actions… gender binaries have never been brought up at all, which is not necessarily a good thing because we have to talk about them. The problem is that I don't really know how to discuss these things with a lot of the people who are migrating and the migrant community. I don't think I yet have the tools to do that (interview with Jeremy).

I asked Jeremy how he thought that the tools could be gained to talk about race and gender within the collective, and whether he thought people would set aside the time for that. He answered that he thought more recently people had become interested in intersectional politics and that the climate to talk about it was upon us 'if time could be allocated'.

> The intersectional politics that I've encountered has always come from outside of the solidarity networks and it's difficult to set aside time and space to discuss these things and they never are fully explored and it's never talked about in a specific way because it's always boiled down to time, space and practical and kind of slightly glib terms of phrase about what may happen –specifically in terms of gender and race- but they're never engaged with in a very complex manner but then I think that's bad… I feel like No Borders is constructed by intersectional politics and it's included in it but it's never talked about explicitly which is probably a bad thing, but then I'm trying in my own way to construct and understand these differences through the actions that I commit (interview with Jeremy).

Jeremy was not the only one who mentioned that uncomfortable discussions around safety could take place if only time was allocated. Rita similarly noted that her discomfort around what she believed to be a 'sleazy vibe' towards her as one of the few 'straight' women involved with organizing a particular No Borders event, had left her feeling like sexism was rife in the collective,

> Rita: When there's lots of heterosexual men and they're being dominating I feel personally like I can pretend that it's alright, but it's not alright. If another person was there who was maybe younger or who'd had a bad experience was… maybe getting hit on by them, there'd be more of this dynamic and there could be a problem. I feel like there isn't with me but there's so much that could very quickly not be all right and you'd have nowhere to go with that and you'd have a lot of antagony. I could do something, like call a meeting looking at the dynamics of it but it would be considered naval-gazy.
> Me: Yeah, 'Don't you understand that there's 16 people on hunger strike right now?' And you want to talk about a bit of sexism at the pub?
> Rita: Yeah. It would be exactly like that. It's really bad. Now that I'm actually breaking it down and thinking about it, it's actually not OK. And it might be that I'd be more involved in No Borders if it wasn't that particular dynamic… (interview with Rita).

It is important to learn from these contributions. Stengel and Weems (2010) and hooks (1990) argue that in the quest for safer spaces we must remember that discomfort does not impede learning. The Roestone collective argue that individuals in collective environments should feel 'safe enough'- but not necessarily comfortable- to voice their opinions and constructively respond to their peers. This is the kind of atmosphere of reflexivity that is necessary to change the culture of silence around safety and Otherness in our shared organizing spaces. It is not easy to talk about how each of us feels safe and unsafe in our shared spaces, but creating an atmosphere where we attempt to is a reasonable place to start.

4. Safety in Complexity

I would now like to look at the way safety can be constructed through universalizing particular actions or traits as 'normal' and 'to be expected' from particular groups. The Roestone collective observe that strategies to create safety often fail to critically engage with the paradigms that underlie harassment and discrimination (2014:8).

> … I think in Calais you're often in the situation where your race defines you more than your gender, so the westerners that come over to do No Borders migrant solidarity actions are often seen as a homogenous group, some of them are obviously targeted or treated differently because of their gender but I think that race is more of a division in that space than gender (interview with Jeremy, Feb 2013).

There is a certain expectation from some activists in Calais that anyone who comes to do solidarity work will agree to be in the space 'primarily' to show solidarity to migrants (fieldwork, March 2013). This can result in complaints by women not being taken seriously, as they are not as important as the 'division put in place by race' (interview with Jeremy) and other privileges associated with European citizenship. This, along with a desire to universalize categories of 'all women' and 'all men' to avoid racial or cultural essentialism, can in fact lead to marginalization of women and an entrenching of sexism and (Orientalist) racism. The following section is from interview with Sofia about her time at the No Border Camp in Calais as a volunteer at the trauma support group, and as a woman sleeping in a tent alone for the duration of the camp. She described the aftermath of some women reporting being harassed by migrant men,

> Sofia: One night I met some people and they were telling me about two girls at the camp who had had a man following them for some time and they were scared. I tried to speak about this to some people...and you know how many people left the camp because of this sexism. And of course… some migrants tried to go into people's tents. One of them tried to come into my tent, maybe about one or two o'clock in the morning and he came again a couple of times...And I didn't feel safe there. But the frustration about this wasn't that he was a migrant…
> Me: No.
> Sofia: But this was the reaction of some of the activists that I told. One of them was like, 'This is a terrible, they can't do that! But those poor men, they haven't had a shag for one and a half years, So…' And I thought, what? What kind of excuse is that? And I knew because of working at the trauma support that drunk European men were making huge trouble too… exactly the same at the camp and just as common, so it wasn't about people coming from Afghanistan.

The way that Sofia recounted this event showed the pressures that have been an ongoing presence in discussions of gender and race in Calais. The pressure to both hold migrant men and activists to account in the same way so as to not be making

excuses based on someone's race on the one hand, and the pressure to ignore certain elements of sexism in the camp because of the difficulties associated with the journey from war-torn origins (seemingly this leaves migrants in a position where they cannot be expected understand someone pointing 'get out of my tent' on account of vagaries attributed to cultural background) on the other. Both of these conclusions are reductive, and whilst a communication directly about these sorts of issues is difficult, especially when you cannot find a translator in the middle of the night, the camp reached a crisis point because these clumsy politics of fear were at play.

5. Safety in Sobriety

The idea of a safer spaces policy is that it is an agreement that people who want to frequent a particular space will sign up to. Kavita pointed out that there will eventually be a situation where people do not agree to the conditions of the space, and asked- What then?

> It's all very social contract as well isn't it? Sign something, agree to something. What if you don't agree? Cos the point of the Safe Space policy is surely that when it's controversial you're undone. Unless something's done to enforce it… otherwise it's just a list of nice ideas. Utopian ideas, really. So unless there's some come-uppance to it… I dunno like...what?
> Me: Yeah it's a bit like being a regulator isn't it? Finding an appropriate punishment and...
> K: Yeah. A system. It's breeding a system

This conversation is linked to the earlier ideas of community accountability and transformative justice referenced in the introduction, but there is an added level of complexity when someone involved in your project cannot comply with safer space policies due to their own methods of managing their vulnerability.

The environment in Calais is one of a high stress a lot of the time. At any moment everyone in the organising space is preparing for a raid or some kind of police harassment (I witnessed this tension during my fieldwork, March 2013 and throughout my involvement with CMS). Some people are suffering from post-traumatic stress symptoms or other mental health problems resulting from their time in warzones or other personal misfortune. There is very little support in Calais for either migrants or activists[6]- this can to self-medicating, frequently in the form of alcohol. The presence of alcohol can indicate a less-than-safe environment for some people, ex-addicts, survivors, amongst others. Whether this immediately makes the space unsafe is not clear though. My experience of the office in Calais is that it is often fairly contained during the day, but often quite drunken and rowdy in the evenings with those who are not attempting to cross the border that night attempting to unwind with activists and local people. I wrote the following fieldnotes during my most recent trip to Calais,

> We (Virginia and I) were the only women in the office of about 30 men and were getting attention, but no one hassled us- they were seemingly just pleased to have different company. One guy followed us around, but I think it was more because he was confused than aggressive, he was visibly drunk. He kept saying 'You take me in car, England, yes' and then going away for a minute before returning again. He repeated this to us about 50 times, it was more tiresome than intimidating, but he was a big guy and I didn't really know what he thought we could do for him- he'd be much too big to hide in a car. In the end he followed us

[6] Some information on Trauma Support for activists in Calais has been produced, but it barely relates to gendered vulnerabilities https://www.activist-trauma.net/assets/files/ATnobor_A5_4pp_leaflet.pdf

> to the car that was taking us to the train station. He was still repeating the same sentence and wouldn't let us shut the car door- that felt something between scary and painful- I could feel his frustration. I felt really sad about that guy. He was too drunk to be nimble enough to cross to the UK that night, I wondered how long he'd been trapped in the office drinking cans of beer asking women not to take the train, and realised it could have been a long time. People who spend a long time in Calais know which men are persistently annoying or sleazy or troublesome, I hoped he wasn't one of them. I didn't think the guy was dangerous, just stuck. In lots of ways (Fieldnotes, March 2013).

Alcohol consumption, be it recommendations of limited intake or total sobriety have featured in discussions about how to run communal spaces. In the lead up to recent Pride celebrations, antiracist transgender rights activist Sunny Drake posted a critique of the ways that trans women have historically been excluded from parties and political organizing spaces due to their substance usage. The advice from Sunny was that event organisers need to be particularly attuned to which people are excluded from collective spaces due to addictions that cannot be explained as simply 'anti-social activity'.

> Whilst I love intentionally sober space (Sober Pride!), I also want our communities to be able to hold space for those who use alcohol or drugs as medication or to cope with this shitty world… because let's remember that addiction happens with in the context of the stuff going on in people's lives (like experiencing homophobia, racism… transphobia, poverty, recovering from trauma or self -medicating for stress and anxiety), so our approaches will look different depending on who we are and what's going on… I'm horrified that visionaries such as Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P Johnson (both trans women of colour on the frontline of Stonewall) were banned from some LGBTQ spaces because of their drinking or using. The impacts of that likely involved further marginalisation for each of them, as well as a HUGE loss of wisdom and experience to the movements which they kick-started (Drake: 2013).

This is an important reflection as it reminds solidarity organisers that wisdom comes from many places, and any attempt to make spaces safe for normative participants must also be offered to those that are suffering non-normatively. Sunny suggests that a culture of individuals drinking less (for those that can), may be beneficial.

> Given that many sexual assaults and non-consensual behavior have alcohol involved, drinking less can also mean there are more folks around to support a culture of consent and community safety.
> So how do we create inclusive spaces that feel safe and welcoming for a whole myriad of people, both those who are in recovery and sober as well as those who can't or choose not to function without alcohol and substances? Plan more events that are designated sober space, no alcohol served, but that if somebody turns up drunk, they are not kicked out of the space and are still welcome (Drake: 2014).

This is echoed here by Andrea Smith, an indigenous rights activist from the INCITE! collective who writes,

> Indigenous organizer Heather Milton-Lightening once prophetically declared at an Indigenous Women's Network gathering many years ago that our movements were shunning people who might have issues, such as substance abuse. She called on us all to embrace whoever wants to be part of our movements as they are rather than as who we think they should be. The challenge for us, she noted, is to build movement structures that take into account the reality of how personal and collective trauma has impacted all of us (Smith 2014).

These are five considerations for those that wish to pursue the composition of

processual and messy collective writing experiences in the safer space policy. These policies are still widely used, and thus the insights from my fieldwork and interviews aim to make a contribution to the way that these policies are written.
I want to finish by recognizing the incredibly important work of those on the ground in Calais. This is small contribution towards thinking of our collective safety as activists, migrants and local people building the new world in the shell of the old- a world without borders.

Interviewees

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Foreman, Josie. Personal Interview. 04 February 2013.
Hall, Rita. Personal Interview. 13 February 2013.
Koppelman, Jack. Personal Interview. 16 February 2013.
Lowrey, Mia. Personal Interview. 6 January 2014.
Patel, Kavita. Personal Interview. 12 March 2013.
Miller, Virginia. Personal Interview. 20 February 2013.
Goncal, Sofia. Personal Interview. 09 March 2013.
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